

CAN WE PLEASE DROP “CHAPTER 3”?
THE NEED TO INTERTWINE DIVERSITY THROUGHOUT COURSE CURRICULUM

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ABSTRACT. Although diversity is regarded as a key component in understanding families, many family studies educators in higher education struggle with implementing effective ways to address issues of diversity in their course curriculum. The benefits of embracing diversity as an intrinsic approach to the teaching of family studies are examined. Additionally, perspectives on the challenges of fostering alternative formats to teaching “Chapter 3” are addressed. Lastly, new pedagogical strategies and innovative approaches to incorporating diversity throughout and across Family Studies courses are discussed. Authors’ personal perspectives and experiences are incorporated to illustrate the process of moving towards an infused approach to dealing with diversity within Family Studies curriculum.

In this article we explore the struggle of three faculty of color who have grappled with teaching diversity as part of the whole educational process rather than as an isolated topic. As we reflected on our personal experiences as family studies students and our maturation as educators, we began to question traditional approaches used to teach students what we considered to be important about families. We believe that there is a major conflict between traditional ways of teaching and the goals we have for student outcomes. From a theoretical and practice base this paper examines benefits and challenges as well as the continuous work needed to intertwine issues of diversity throughout Family Studies curriculum in higher education.

Borrowing from the work of other family studies scholars (e.g., Allen, 2000; Walker, 1996) who have written on issues related to diversity and curriculum, this paper is grounded in the pedagogical perspectives of feminism and cooperative learning. Feminist principles challenge us to see our teaching as a vehicle through which we can create change, eradicate oppression and achieve social justice. In order to address any of these goals, students, faculty and

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administrators must come to an understanding that issues of diversity should be as pervasive in our curricula as they are in our societies.

We also utilize the cooperative learning approach because this paradigm allows the classroom to be a place where all that are present can serve as both teachers and learners, thus minimizing the power differential that exists when using traditional approaches to teaching (Allen, 1988). This creates a more supportive climate for learning, and calls for faculty and students to give more of themselves in the learning process. This approach also provides the necessary space for instructors and students to acknowledge the aspects of their identity that make them diverse individuals. Incorporating these factors into the teaching and learning about families can provide clear examples of how diversity is intertwined within our very lives.

Benefits of infusing issues of diversity

While significant steps have been taken recently to introduce concepts of diversity into Family Studies curricula, family diversity has historically been viewed as a “stand alone” topic rather than as an integral part of the functioning of families. For students, this conveys the message that information related to diversity is something “extra” rather than something central to the understanding of families. Meacham, McClellan, Pearse, and Greene (2003) found that courses infused with diversity resulted in lower levels of prejudice and blame toward minority groups, increased knowledge of variations in human development, and inculcation of critical thinking skills. These outcomes were attributed to the infusion of diversity throughout the course material as well as across a sequence of courses (Meacham et al., 2003). These scholars suggest that a freestanding “diversity day” or a single multiculturalism course is less effective at enhancing multiculturalism than addressing diversity using a more infused approach (Meacham et al., 2003).

In addition, traditional approaches to addressing diversity suggest that ethnicity and race are the only factors that create diverse experiences for families. The single chapter approach, which commonly focuses only on the cultural values and family strengths of “ethnic minority” families, provides students with little exposure to the plethora of factors that create diversity and influence family life. This undermines the understanding of the heterogeneity that exists within various groups, which results in the reinforcement of stereotypes. These conventional approaches also reinforce a narrow view of diversity leaving many students disconnected and unable to personalize issues surrounding diversity. One author has attempted to provide a more realistic view of diversity by using a group project/cooperative learning assignment.

Early in my teaching career I had a “diversity assignment” where students picked an ethnic, cultural, or religious group and did a 30 minute oral presentation to classmates addressing the dating, marriage, parenting, and family values of their chosen group. Typically there were two class meetings that were dedicated to this assignment. After few semesters, I realized how ineffective this was. It was clear that students were zoning out by the second or third presentation, and there were usually had six different presentations a semester. I would even find myself feeling overwhelmed with amount of information being presented in the group projects and I began to see these projects as a burden. More importantly, when I asked students to cite information on exams that they learned from these diversity presentations they were unable to discuss anything in depth and basically provided me with a check list of vague characteristics that could be applied to any ethnic cultural or religious group. I knew I needed to make changes.

While the use of a cooperative education model involved students in their own learning, the assignment did not produce, for the students, significant levels of insight into or lasting curiosity about the lives of the populations studied. The above assignment also subscribed to the traditional approach of addressing family diversity as a single topic that could be addressed in two class meetings rather than as an intrinsic value that would be woven throughout the course content and goals.

The prior example gives us an assignment based way of traditional approaches to addressing diversity: this next example illustrates an attempt to make diversity a relevant part of the curriculum. One author describes her first teaching experience to demonstrate this point.

The first course I ever taught seemed designed to examine diverse family lifestyles and experiences. I was pleased that the reader that served as textbook for the course offered opportunities for the exploration of diverse families. However, while we were free to explore diversity in that course, I was still doing the “Chapter 3” talks for students who had clearly not been exposed to the material on families who were racially/ethnically diverse and who had certainly not been exposed to information about any other type of diversity. Was the expectation that ‘diversity’ would be covered in that single course and could therefore be an add-on or afterthought in the rest of the curriculum?

Although both of the cases show attempts at making diversity an explicit part of the course/curriculum, diversity was still treated as a dissociated concept rather than an intrinsic part of the whole. We realized that these approaches were inconsistent with our understanding of diversity and our lived realities of diversity, making a stronger case for the benefits of infusing diversity.

We believe that approaching diversity in family life as a core value rather than as an isolated issue is beneficial to students, educators, and higher education institutions. Foremost, it helps students recognize that families are embedded in a complex set of intersecting hierarchies and power systems. Those hierarchies and power systems may have complementary or non-complementary effects on families or the individual in families. Infusing diversity throughout the curriculum demonstrates to students that these issues are important to developing a comprehensive understanding of individuals and families on all levels. For example, the experiences of marriage, gender, and parenting are all influenced by multiple societal, cultural, contextual, and historical factors which translate into diverse experiences of family life. Helping students make these connections is critical in developing their consciousness of “how” and “why” families differ. Perhaps, more importantly, understanding those connections will help students to understand why the differences matter. This moves students away from relying on all-inclusive categories, stereotypes and prejudices so that they can develop more accurate perceptions and more authentic social interactions.

Addressing issues of diversity throughout course work and across the curriculum also limits the alienation and stigmatization of students from under-represented groups and helps them to feel more a part of the college or university community (MacPhee, Kreutzer & Fritz, 1994). The infusion of diversity content throughout the curriculum allows those students increased opportunities to voice their experiences in instances that seem immediately relevant to the content of the course. This has subsequent positive implications for the retention of students from diverse backgrounds in that they feel more connected the curriculum and to the institution (Furr & Elling, 2002). Maintaining a diverse campus population should be a priority as there are several empirical studies that indicate higher education institutions with more diverse

populations have greater potential in creating positive learning environments, as well as producing graduates who are more open minded and have strong interpersonal relationship skills (MacPhee et al., 1994).

It is essential to note the macro-level implications when considering the benefits of infusing diversity throughout the curriculum. Gurin, Dey, Gurin, & Hurtdao (2003) suggest that students' experiences with diversity in college can reduce the perpetuation of segregation in larger society. Based on Braddock's (1985) perpetuation hypothesis, it is argued that racial segregation tends to perpetuate itself unless critical action is taken to disrupt the cycle (Milem, Umbeach, & Liang, 2004). According to Milem and associates (2004), this "critical action" can occur within the experiences that students have with diversity at higher education institutions. In fact, research conducted by these scholars found that exposure to diverse information and ideas in college curriculum plays an integral role in student involvement in diversity related activities and decreases in segregation outside of the classroom (Milem et al.).

Challenges Connected to the Infusion of Diversity

In reviewing the benefits to the infusion of diversity throughout the curriculum, it seems strange that so few family studies courses and programs have adopted this pedagogical approach. Intuitively, educators and faculty may know that weaving diversity throughout their courses is important to creating an optimal learning environment for students; however, there are myriad challenges that make it difficult to execute these ideas. A prevailing issue in infusing diversity into the curriculum is the lack of attention to the obstacles that students and educators will face in the process.

Historically the dominant discourse within family studies has not acknowledged the true diversity of family life (Allen, 2000). Because diversity is not been addressed adequately or

honestly in family science research and because these traditions have been the basis for the ideologies that provide the core of our instruction as family studies scholars, it is not surprising that educators struggle with infusing it into the curriculum. Lastly, this traditional way of discussing diversity is evident in the limited ways that diversity has been defined. One author found this to be evident in an online discussion board set up students to discuss issue regarding diversity:

In an online discussion board I asked students to discuss how prepared they felt to work with children and families from diverse backgrounds. They were also asked to discuss their strengths and challenges they may face in their future work with children and families from diverse backgrounds. An overwhelming number of students reported that they were fully prepared to work with families and children from diverse backgrounds. The most cited reason for this preparedness was having friends and classmates of diverse backgrounds and being a caring, open minded person. This demonstrated to me the limited perspectives my students had regarding diversity and they needed to see diversity through a much broader lens.

A significant challenge to the process of infusing diversity throughout the curriculum is the narrow definition that is traditionally attached to the concept of diversity. Diversity is, in most cases, seen by students, faculty and administration as being vested in race/ethnicity. It is critical that students be exposed to a working definition of diversity that is truly reflective of the many factors that make individuals and families diverse. Therefore, we suggest broadening the definition of diversity to “address issues related to different immigration experiences, occupational levels and skills, language, religion, cultural values and beliefs, education, disability, class, gender, sexual orientation, and age”(Stewart & Goldfarb, 2007, pp. 15-16). This

broader definition can influence the choices faculty make in terms of the course topics, activities, and assignments that will be incorporated into courses. Viewing diversity in this way also forces us to look at the intersectionality of our identities and recognize the real life examples of diversity in our lived realities. This broader definition might also be a step towards shifting the dominant discourse within family science as well as our thinking about research questions and topics we ask, and ways in which we interpret our data.

In broaching discussions regarding diversity, issues of race are often the first to be raised. Discussions related to race often produce immediate polarization with all sides entrenched in their own biases, defensiveness and/or feelings of blame (Mio & Barker-Hackett, 2003). Additionally, the discourse on race is usually pigeon holed to address issues solely surrounding black versus white. This has the potential to ostracize students who do not fit these racial categories as well as create feelings of competitiveness and discomfort. The unwillingness to work through the discomfort of such a situation can lead to a desire to ‘just get through it’ or to the use of language and teaching strategies that place issues related to diversity in the realm of theory rather than practice. Working with a broader definition that includes additional aspects of diversity makes the topic less racially charged, helps students to understand themselves in terms of their own membership in diverse groups, and, for many students, provides entry into the conversation about diversity.

Similarly, Helms, Malone, Henze, Satiani, Perry, and Warren (2003) assert that many students experience high levels of resistance to issues of diversity. Those levels of resistance may exist for a number of reasons such as a student’s personal bias, the fear that they may say something that will cause others to view them negatively, or a lack of willingness to acknowledge the existence and impact of bias (Mio & Barker-Hackett, 2003). It is further argued

that resistance usually comes in the form of students disengaging from the learning process (Helms et al., 2003). It is also not uncommon for students to display feelings of anger and hostility when their biases and stereotypes are challenged (Allen et al., 2001). One author recounts an incident below dealing with a student's unwillingness to acknowledge the validity of the experiences of other students.

During an in-class discussion about marriage rates and the gender ratio imbalance in the African American community, the conversation shifted to a discussion on the disproportional rates of incarcerated African American males. Some students offered personal experiences with racial profiling by law enforcement and argued for how this might be contributing factor to the incarceration rates. Some students also discussed the emotions associated with feeling harassed by law enforcement and having to question whether their treatment was due to skin color. Other students expressed disagreement by stating racial profiling only exists because Blacks and Latinos are the ones who are doing the crimes. In additional, these students argued that if "those people" followed the law and the rules they would not be arrested and imprisoned.

In dealing with resistance, it is important to show students the benefits derived from having a multi-cultural existence and an appreciation of diversity. Students can begin to understand how their personal and professional lives can be enriched through recognizing their biases, opening themselves to understanding the divergent experiences of others, and being more culturally aware.

Similar issues may arise when trying to incorporate other issues of diversity. Students are relatively accurate in identifying extreme and overt forms of discriminatory behavior; however,

they are less skilled in identifying the more subtle underlying forms. Consequently, it is imperative that educators help students understand and recognize more insidious forms of oppression and discrimination that are at work in contemporary society. It is also very easy for individuals to “finger point” and absolve them of responsibility in the cycle of discrimination. For example, it is not uncommon to hear students say, “I don’t discriminate against people who are different than me” or “I treat/see everyone as an equal.” Washburn, Manley, and Holiwski (2003) propose that in order to overcome this challenge we need to help students make specific connections in their personal lives as to how they are affected by, and perhaps perpetuate, these more covert forms of discrimination. An Interview Exercise provides an example of students coming to this realization. Students were asked to interview someone different than themselves using a broad definition of diversity. While most students chose to interview individuals with whom they had prior interactions, all were surprised how little they knew about the ways in which diversity impacted the lives and experiences of those who had seemed so similar to themselves. Some were astounded to find that they had made assumptions and unintentionally committed acts which they now saw as offensive & disrespectful. Many students then sought to learn more about their interviewee and about the culture of that interviewee. It was, thus, not an assignment soon forgotten but one that caused students to consider their past, present and future actions.

Students are not alone in the need to overcome certain levels of discomfort and knowledge deficits regarding diversity. Educators are also guilty of not acknowledging their biases and prejudices. Those biases or the lack of acknowledgement of those biases may impact the willingness of educators to address or discuss certain issues. Further, assumptions are made about student populations and many times educators do not recognize the diversity of students

that exist within their classrooms. For example, faculty may be faced with what appears to be a homogeneous group of students of Western European descent (White) but that group may contain students of differing socioeconomic statuses, sexual orientations or parenting statuses, as well as differing ethnicities (e.g., Italian American, Jewish American). All of these issues cross lines of race and ethnicity but represent important areas of diversity.

Allen (2000) asserts in her commentary on Family Studies research that “Using personal experiences as a bridge to connect us to other human beings opens us to new theoretical and methodological possibilities” (p. 13). In terms of infusing diversity into curriculum, giving ourselves permission to be ourselves in our classrooms may open up new possibilities for teaching and learning.

When I introduce myself the first day of class, I introduce myself as being born in Chile, raised in Venezuela, lived in Israel and studied in the United States. I proceed to say that I am a mother, a wife, a member of dual career family, a daughter, a friend, a colleague, a scholar, a woman, and an individual and these are all the culture that I bring into my teaching.

Perhaps if we are explicit about who we are and what we assume, and how this is influenced by our families of origin and shaped by our current families, this might be useful to students to do the same. This also challenges students’ preexisting social categories and labels because it does not quite fit neatly under any of their existing labels (Goldfarb, 1998).

Institutions of higher learning must also consider attitudes regarding assigning responsibility for the teaching of diversity content. Often, scholars of color or those who belong to diverse groups are assigned to teach the ‘diversity’ courses, even if those courses do not coincide with their specialty areas or *instead* of course in their specialty area (Brayboy, 2003). It

further perpetuates the belief that diversity is only an issue for and about persons of color or persons in other 'special' categories. These attitudes and approaches also allow individual faculty, departments and institutions of higher learning to feel as if they have addressed the diversity issue while not confronting their own biases. The experiences of two of the coauthors illustrate the slow pace of curricular change, as well as one method of addressing the issue.

As an undergraduate, I was confronted with faculty who spoke little of families or family life beyond a white, middle class, suburban, nuclear model. That was not my experience and I was left with the impression that my family context (African American, lower class, rural and extended) was at best abnormal and at worst pathological. When I returned to academia as a mature graduate student, I found faculty teaching from the same model and mindset, though there was now some acknowledgement that there might be other models of family life which operated on the margins of society. It was still clear that those models operated as a reaction to an inability or unwillingness to adhere to societal norms. Since I was now more willing to assert and discuss my experiences than I had been as an undergraduate, I now found myself cast in the role of impromptu expert on family diversity. I often wondered who would have supplemented the meager, negative and sometimes incorrect material in our textbooks if I had not been in the room or if I had still been unwilling to speak. I also noted that my classmates, even those with whom I had relationships outside class, initially found me and the information I presented less than credible. I was often asked to state a source other than personal experience as if I were making it up. When I provided sources, I was then asked to defend the sources since they were not published in

mainstream family studies journals. I soon became a favored guest speaker in graduate and undergraduate courses on the day when “Chapter 3” was covered. Often, the faculty member did not even remain in the room during the presentation, leaving me with little hope for follow-up discussion or incorporation of material into the general context of the class.

Alternative Approaches to “Chapter 3: The Continuous Work Needed

Because it is often difficult to generate ideas on how infuse diversity throughout curriculum, we will discuss some specific ways to intertwine diversity. We focus on the student as a source of diversity by incorporating their experiences as part of the conversation. Next the creation of safe space allows us to dismantle myths and stereotypes in an open and honest interaction. Lastly, we discuss the role of the instructor in modeling positive behaviors. These strategies open up personal and professional possibilities of infusing diversity within all areas of one’s life.

The value of infusing diversity is evident; therefore, it is important to raise issues of diversity early in courses and the program. This will help students see the rest of the concepts and course material through a broad lens. It also gives the students fair warning of the instructor’s expectations and intentions. Moreover, making issues of diversity pervasive in a course also allows for discussion of within group differences. This adds an acknowledgement of diverse groups as complex entities rather than as stereotypic images.

Students as a source of diversity.

Allen (2000) suggests focusing on the intersections of varying social locations (e.g., race, gender, SES, etc.) rather than relying on categories, labels, stereotypes. It is also important that educators facilitate the process of students seeing themselves as “diverse” beings. One way to

achieve this is to help students in identifying the various social groups to which they belong. This is an effective way for them to explore how one's social location impacts the ways in which they experience family life and larger society. Assisting students in understanding how membership in these various social groups impacts their daily interactions and experiences in the world, helps to personalize the discussion of diversity for students.

For one author, significant emphasis was placed on not only acknowledging diversity, but on providing examples of how those differences shape the lives and experiences of families and individuals.

In a *Family Counseling* class, students were asked to conduct a self assessment and family interview regarding their families' values and attitudes. While these tasks stand alone in allowing students to become more self-aware, they were also part of a larger assignment that encompassed the entire semester. These assignments utilized a specific set of questions which students were later required to ask of an interviewee who was in some way different than themselves. The first part of the assignment helped students to understand the ways in which their personal/family history and ideals shaped their attitudes and life experiences and prepared them for future aspects of the semester long project.

Moving students to this level of understanding is a precursor to understanding how group membership influences one's biases, perspectives, values, basis for stereotypes, prejudices, and misconceptions. For example, when women begin to think of themselves as a group that is oppressed, they begin to understand themselves as the 'other.' As long as students fail to see themselves as a part of the diversity conversation, they will struggle with embracing ideas of

diversity. Contextualizing issues of diversity for students by making these issues relevant to their personal and professional lives can have a long lasting impact on their development.

Because of the way diversity is typically conceptualized, it is not uncommon for students, especially those who are of Western European descent (White), to feel that these discussions are irrelevant to their personal lives and that these discussions do not speak to their reality (Tatum, 1997). Consequently many students may “tune out” or demonstrate resistance when the topic of diversity is raised. For example, it is often difficult for students of European descent to view themselves as having race or ethnicity (Tatum, 1997). For those students, the concept of diversity has generally been applied to the ‘other.’ The lives, histories and developmental trajectories of these students have been those to which ‘diverse groups’ have been compared. Heterosexual students of European descent have been conditioned to think of themselves as “normal” and others as divergent (Tatum, 1997). While that divergence may not be viewed as pathological, it may still be viewed as different from the ‘norm.’ One strategy that has been somewhat successful in provoking discussion is to have the students read materials that provide descriptions of the characteristics of white ethnic groups as well as descriptions of those groups typically described in such material (Hines, Preto, McGoldrick, Almeida, & Weltman, 1999). For many students, those readings are their first opportunity to see themselves described in a stereotypical way. Most are quick to point out that while some of the characteristics are true, some apply to only a minimal extent. Further, some students acknowledge that lessons or interventions developed based on those stereotypes would be insufficient to meet the real needs of the population with whom one was working.

Another strategy to help in this endeavor is to get students to assess the positive and negative impact of one’s biases and stereotypes on their personal and professional relationships

(Dogra, 2001). In an effort to challenge students further, asking them to examine how their biases and perspectives on diversity may affect their feelings, behaviors and day to day lives can be eye opening (Washburn et al., 2003). Also, having students explore the personal experiences they have had with people of different backgrounds and then asking them to think about the feelings attached to those experiences can be an effective way of identifying biases and personalizing the discussion of diversity. Walker (1993) also emphasizes the importance of making issues of diversity relevant to the lives of students. Breaking away from the traditional modes of teaching is an essential part of infusing diversity. For example, one author states,

Since my goal for each class is to have students connect with the subject matter, I have moved away from strict textbook and lecture format to the use of materials and strategies that reveal actual families as they live their diversity. Narratives of individual life stories and documentaries have served this purpose on one level. These materials supplement textbooks which provide inadequate information about the complexity of family life . Recently, I have begun to use a HBO documentary (Lalee's Kin), that is an excellent resource in demonstrating the intersectionality of race, socioeconomic status, regionality, and issues related to rural life. It also demonstrates the strengths and challenges of extended family structures. The documentary inevitably produces an emotional response in students, as well as a forum for the discussion of family theory, family structure, parenting, and issues related to poverty. After an initial, failed attempt to discuss family issues, I discovered that the emotional issues were foremost in the minds of the students and had to be addressed before the work of connecting the lives of

real people to the conceptual and theoretical aspects of the class could be accomplished.

The discussion of these issues provided a level of insight into the lives and needs of those in the documentary that even the most skillful lecture or most well written textbook could not have provided. However, the level of emotion to be processed required a ‘safe space’ which must be created and nurtured by faculty.

Creating safe space.

A seeming lack of insight into the importance of diversity or a lack of sensitivity could be due to a lack of experience or to the lack of a safe forum in which to explore and discuss such issues (Rothschild, 2003). Creating a safe space for students to express themselves openly and honestly is a key component for effectively addressing diversity (Rothschild, 2003). The concept of a “safe space” has become part of the jargon in the literature and discussion on diversity and multiculturalism. However, few people know how to define it or how to develop it. In arguing for the development of a “safe space” it is important to recognize that there two issues that require consideration. On the one hand, this concept conveys the idea that no one says anything that might be hurtful the instructor and or fellow classmates. This does help in setting boundaries for conversations regarding diversity and creates a classroom environment where the feelings of others are respected. However, it may also set the stage for unexpressed biased attitudes, which, if not addressed, just fuel cycles of discrimination and oppression. Allowing students to speak freely and openly on diverse issues, regardless of the position, gives faculty the permission to tackle/dismantle the biased stereotyped perspectives that are voiced. The creation of a safe space in which to process the emotional responses that arise with any discussion of diversity begins long before such topics arise. It is not enough for faculty to merely state that the space is safe,

though such a statement is useful. Students must *believe* that the space is safe and that discussion is welcome.

An instructor must work to create an open environment for discussion. Devoting a portion of each class to discussion is useful in developing an atmosphere where discussion is viewed as acceptable. Insertion of a question designed to promote discussion into each class session allows students become accustomed to sharing thoughts and get the opportunity to test faculty response to divergent ideas. It has also been useful to have the initial processing of emotional responses occur in small groups rather than in the larger group. Both faculty and students must remember that the purpose of those (small & large) group discussions is not only to manage the emotional response but to connect the information provided in the resource (DVD, reading, outside interaction) to the course content. To this end, the tasks of the small group are guided by instructions to discuss personal reactions, then to connect the resource to the course content.

Modeling positive behavior.

There are several ways that faculty can model the intertwining of diversity into the curriculum. Walker (1993) highlights this issue by pointing out that the language that we use is not always consistent with the objectives of promoting diversity. For example, it is common to hear educators using hetero-centric language or speaking about families in the nuclear family sense (Walker, 1993). Walker (1993) suggests being aware of the ways that our language reinforces stereotypes and bias. Making a conscious decision to discuss concepts related to family life (e.g., marriage, parenting, sexuality, gender) in light of their historic/traditional underlying assumptions might be a way to expose the inherent biases and open students up to diverse ways of thinking.

As faculty members encourage students to explore their various and intertwining identities, those same faculty must be prepared to work with students at the intersection of those identities. Walker (1993) suggests decreasing the distance between the instructor and students is helpful in developing a supportive classroom environment. One way to achieve this is through identifying similarities between the instructor and the students. Walker (1993) tells her students that she, too, has a lot to learn about diversity and family life. Another strategy discussed by Walker (1993) entails the instructor sharing information about their cultural, ethnic, background. This creates a common ground and helps to develop a sense of community in classrooms.

Additionally, when discussing topics related to family life and child development, educators should include examples of families and children from diverse cultural, socioeconomic, structural, and racial/ethnic backgrounds. This gives students the sense that development and family dynamics can differ based on one's social location and cultural belief system. For example, since gender roles is a popular topic in many family studies courses, providing students with specific examples of how the definitions and expectations attached to gender differ globally and across the various ethnic, religious, and cultural groups in the United States is useful. Having students demonstrate diversity by putting the responsibility in their hands can also be effective.

For each course topic, I require students to find real life illustrations of diversity for that topic (e.g., parenting, marriage, sexuality, aging, gender roles, etc...). Specifically, students have identified examples of how parenting is influenced by family structure, neighborhood/community factors, or minority status in a particular society and demonstrated this in short presentations to their peers. This

is a good way for students to actively contribute to their learning and the learning of their classmates.

This can be done with many other topics in family studies curriculum, such as parenting, marriage and experiences of middle/older adulthood, to show that family life is shaped by contextual circumstances and cultural values.

I came to my first faculty position with a determination to intertwine diversity throughout any course I taught, though I was unaware of the challenges that would be present in doing so. In my teaching today, I challenge students to consider even the most 'usual' topics in unusual ways and thereby begin the process of intertwining diversity. For example, a discussion of single parenthood moves beyond only a discussion of statistics and issues of the personal and parental irresponsibility of single mothers where a nuclear family model is seen as the only appropriate model. We speak also of single fathers and of the growing number of women and men who choose to conceive (or adopt) a child and to parent that child without a partner.

Making these specific links for students helps them to appreciate that there are diverse ways of defining gender, marriage, parenting, and development. Some scholars (Tatum, 1994; Washburn et al., 2003) suggest that students be responsible for developing a plan to demonstrate how they will incorporate class concepts and lessons into their personal lives. Washburn and associates have students write a social action paper where they have to define a personal goal and outline the specific steps they plan to implement to reach that goal. Tatum has students participate in a similar exercise where they are required to identify their personal plan for dismantling racism. This helps students show that they understand the class concepts as well as

supports them in developing specific ways to create personal and social change (Washburn et al.). Comparable assignments can be incorporated into courses that wish to infuse diversity. Students can engage in a project that runs throughout the duration of the course, where they first work on identifying bias and stereotypes, and then work throughout the semester/year on creative ways to address these biases. This can either occur at the personal level, at the community level, or at the legislative level.

Lastly, resource guides are helpful in generating options for activities and supplemental materials. One author says,

It has been difficult for me at times to find resources to assist me in infusing diversity within the course material. However, I have found *Preventing Prejudice* (Ponterotto, Utsey, & Pederson, 2006) to be very useful. This book takes an interdisciplinary approach to examining issues of prejudice and racism utilizing perspectives of psychology, biology, sociology, and anthropology. The authors merge theory, research, and practice to create a comprehensive text that speaks to a broad audience. Moreover, there is heavy emphasis on personal responsibility in examining one's own biases and belief systems as a starting point for eradicating prejudice and racism. Specific teaching tools, activities, and resources that promote personal growth are provided. I like this resource because it focuses on how to address issues of diversity in multiple sectors of our lives. It provides tools on how to be more effective in addressing diversity in the classroom, but also in one's own personal life within their families and their communities.

Conclusions

Fundamentally, weaving diversity throughout Family Studies curriculum will require radical shifts in the value and importance we place on these issues. At all levels in higher education and academia, individuals need to be clear about the benefits of adopting such a perspective. Additionally, speaking freely about the challenges that students and educators will face in the process assists in overcoming these barriers. It is equally important that we hear the voices of all stakeholders (administration, students, scholars, faculty) when developing innovative ways that treat diversity as a core value and not as an isolated topic. The classroom needs to be part of a whole structure of change. More importantly, there should be additional conversations addressing the types of macro-changes that are needed to support these efforts.

Research and scholarship can assist educators in their efforts to infuse diversity throughout the curriculum. Having empirical evidence supporting how infusing diversity influences student learning is imperative. More research is needed, in particular longitudinal studies, to assess the effectiveness of this approach. Furthermore, the preference of many scholarly journals for comparative research needs to be curtailed. Sound research on populations of diverse families does not need to be compared to White middle class families in order to be valid scholarship. Populations from diverse backgrounds should be studied in their own right; there is enough within group variation to study. Lastly, Allen (2000) calls for a post modernist approach to family studies research. In particular, this approach would allow for scholars to bring themselves into their work. Not doing so sets the stage for “false oppositions” (e.g., feminine vs. masculine, black vs. white, etc.) which do not necessary exist in the real world (Allen). Family life is much more complex than this. As Allen states, “Using personal experiences as a bridge to connect us to other human beings opens us to new theoretical and

methodological possibilities” (p. 13). Family studies scholars might consider this approach throughout all of their work, whether it be research or teaching.

At the departmental level, some Family Studies faculty have argued for a sequence of courses addressing issues of diversity and multiculturalism (Meacham et al., 2003). One overt or explicit way of doing this is developing classes where the course titles and content will explicitly make diversity the focus of the course. For example, we have a course entitled working with diverse families and another one entitled poverty and families which explicitly focus on issues of diversity among families. These are core required courses for all of our students. Doing this communicates to students that these issues are central rather than peripheral to their understanding of families and children as well as to their professional development (Meacham et al.). However, infusing diversity and multiculturalism across the curriculum is more beneficial than infusion within one course. Multiculturalism and diversity needs to be written within the course curriculum of all family studies courses. For example, within our department the course objectives for the core courses express our commitment to diversity. Similarly, the required readings and supplemental materials (e.g., audiovisual aids) support diverse up to date perspectives on families.

Not only does diversity have to be intertwined at the curricular level, we should strive to achieve this goal at the University level. Diversity should be reflected in the student body, the instructors and staff, and in the overall philosophy of the institution. Diversity must also be woven into the overall climate of campus life. Gurin, Nagda and Lopez (2004) argue that higher education institutions need to go beyond increasing the enrollment of students from diverse backgrounds. In order to have a significant impact on students’ abilities to be culturally competent and effective agents in a diverse democracy, attention must also be paid to the actual

experience students are having with diversity (Gurin et al.). We suggest these experiences with diversity need to be meaningful, enduring, and consistent across the campus.

Attention should also be paid to the role that this approach can play in interrupting the cycles of oppression and discrimination in larger society. Because it is well documented that college may be the first and or only place where students have the opportunity to ideas regarding diversity as well as interact with individuals from heterogeneous backgrounds (Gurin et al., 2004; Milem et al., 2004), it is imperative that higher education institutions make the infusion of diversity a priority. It is incumbent upon colleges and universities to provide learning environments that that will prepare students to live and work in an increasingly diverse society and global community.

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